



In Iowa's Interest:

Medicare Open Enrollment and You

by Senator Tom Harkin

Each fall, seniors in Iowa and across the country have an opportunity to adjust their Medicare health benefits for the coming year. This period, known as Medicare Open Enrollment, offers beneficiaries a chance to customize their Medicare plans to suit their current health needs. This year, the Open Enrollment period begins on October 15th and ends December 7th. The seven week enrollment period offers seniors a chance to get a jump start on selecting their health plans for 2012, and ensures they will receive essential plan details and membership cards before new coverage starts on January 1, 2012.

To make it easier for seniors to access information, find the best plan and answer questions, Medicare has adjusted their website. The Medicare Plan Finder is a new tool that allows seniors to compare numerous drug and health plans simultaneously. Log on to www.medicare.gov/find-a-plan for this tool. Information included in the Plan Finder includes monthly premiums, deductibles, co-pay levels and prescription drug coverage.

The website also highlights the most popular and highly rated Medicare Advantage and prescription drug plans that have been reported by Medicare recipients. The highest quality plans received an overall rating of five stars with the best performers receiving a “gold star” icon. This new guide can help Iowans analyze others’ experiences with Medicare plans and choose the plan that’s right for them.

I encourage all beneficiaries in Iowa to take a look at these new resources.

For more information about Medicare and the new changes, please visit the following sites: www.medicare.gov, www.cms.hhs.gov/center/openenrollment.asp, or www.shiip.state.ia.us for information specific to Iowa. If you do not have access to a computer, feel free to call 1-800-MEDICARE. And of course, you can find more information on my website at www.harkin.senate.gov.